

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

NJ train crash shows need for bigger crews, workers control
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 80/NO. 39 OCTOBER 17, 2016

US imperialism faces quandary as bombing in Syria escalates

BY NAOMI CRAINE

As Moscow and Damascus step up indiscriminate bombing of Aleppo, U.S. officials Oct. 3 formally suspended negotiations with the Russian government on relaunching a truce in the civil war in Syria. Reaching a deal with Moscow has been the central focus of Washington's policy for months. The break, like the policy itself, reflects the weakness of U.S. imperialism's position in the region, and has sharpened debate within the U.S. ruling class over how to proceed.

Meanwhile, the horrific toll on Syrian workers and farmers continues to mount, as fighting escalates and all of the capitalist powers intervening in Syria — from Washington and Moscow to the governments of Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia — cold-bloodedly maneuver to advance their own interests.

An recording of a Sept. 22 meeting between Secretary of State John Kerry
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100s protest cop killing of Alfred Olango in California

BY DEBORAH LIATOS

EL CAJON, Calif. — Over 300 people marched here Oct. 1 to protest the police killing of 38-year-old Alfred Olango in this San Diego suburb four days earlier. The march was one of daily protests since he was killed.

Olango, a restaurant cook who came to the U.S. from Uganda, was gunned down by police in a taco shop parking lot. He was distraught about the death of his best friend, Olango's mother told Associated Press, and his sister called 911 asking for help because he was acting erratically.

Within one minute of arriving on the scene, Officer Richard Gonsalves shot and killed him while Officer Josh McDaniel simultaneously shocked him with a Taser stun gun. Olango was holding an e-cigarette in front of him and was unarmed.

The protests led police officials to release videos they had been withholding. One shows a woman telling
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Free Oscar López! Independence for Puerto Rico!



Militant photos: above, Jacob Perasso; inset, Cindy Jaquith

Above, Sept. 25 rally in San Juan sponsored by 35 Women for Oscar to demand President Barack Obama free Oscar López Rivera. Inset, Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy speaks to crowd at Sept. 23 Grito de Lares celebration in Lares, Puerto Rico.

Socialist Workers Party backs independence fight

Below is a message delivered by Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president, at the Sept. 23 Grito de Lares celebration in Lares, Puerto Rico, in support of independence from U.S. colonial rule. Kennedy led a nine-day SWP fact-finding and solidarity visit to the island.

It is an honor to join you here today for the Grito de Lares. The Socialist Workers Party in the United States
Continued on page 9

Widespread support for López in Puerto Rico

BY CINDY JAQUITH

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Nearly 200 people, overwhelmingly women, held an animated rally here Sept. 25 to demand that Washington release Puerto Rican independence fighter Oscar López Rivera. He has been held in U.S. prisons for more than 35 years on trumped-up charges of “seditious conspiracy.” Similar protests were held in New York and Chicago.

The rallies were sponsored by 35 Women for Oscar, which for the past
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‘Is Socialist Revolution in US Possible?’ points road forward for working class

The third edition of *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible? A Necessary Debate Among Working People* by Mary-Alice Waters, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party, has just been published by Pathfinder Press. What lies ahead of working people “are struggles that transform us as we fight to transform the twisted social relations of the dog-eat-dog world of capitalism — relations that corrode human solidarity and coarsen us all,” Waters says in the book.

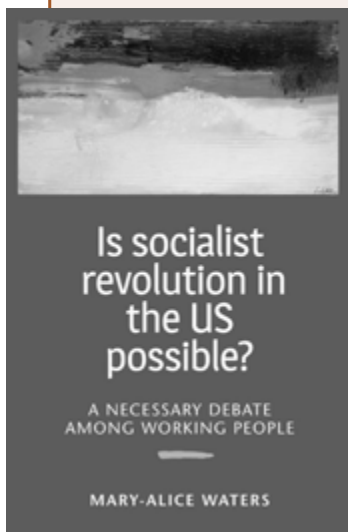
Here we reprint the preface to the new edition.

The debate over the question posed

in the title of the book is critical for working people today. What is the road forward in a world marked by a growing crisis for our class caused by the deepening exhaustion of capitalism? Is the working class capable of transforming itself in struggle and overthrowing capitalist rule and running the world ourselves?

This book — and Pathfinder's other new title *Are They Rich Because They're Smart? Class, Privilege, and Learning Under Capitalism* — are on special for \$7 each, and for \$10 with an introductory 12-week subscription
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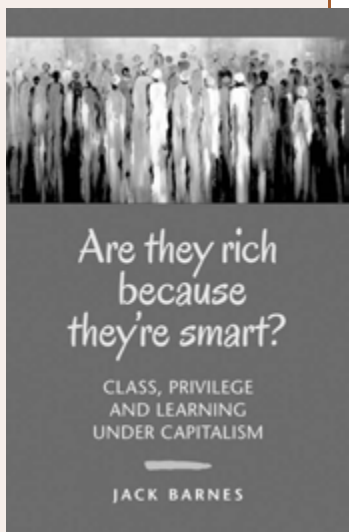
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— Mary-Alice Waters

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See page 8 to contact the Socialist Workers Party or Communist League in your area.

Washington's ‘pivot’ to Asia hits snag with new Philippine regime

BY MARK THOMPSON

As part of the Barack Obama administration's “pivot” to Asia to counter the growing power of China, Washington has been expanding its air, naval and military forces in the Pacific. This includes re-establishing a military presence in the Philippines, a former colony and strategic ally. But this part of the pivot has become less dependable since the May election of President Rodrigo Duterte, whose politics are marked by nationalist and anti-American demagoguery.

At the recent Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit in Laos, Duterte called Obama a “son of a bitch” — for which he later apologized — and a few days later announced he was canceling any future joint naval patrols with Washington in the South China Sea.

“Philippines Pivots Away from the US” and “America's Pacific Pivot Is Sinking,” noted headlines in the Sept.

14 and 19 *Financial Times*. “China is now in power, and they have military superiority in the region,” Duterte said that week.

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—On the picket line, p. 5—

Candy workers strike Just Born ‘Peeps’ plant in Pennsylvania

California farmworkers discuss fight for overtime pay

US ‘pivot’ to Asia hits snag

Continued from front page

Duterte was elected May 9, getting the highest total with 38 percent of the vote. Running as the “anti-establishment” candidate, he mixed profanity-laced nationalist speeches, promises to ease poverty and a pledge to use violence and murder to end rising crime and drug trafficking.

Duterte has long-standing relations with Stalinist political forces in the Philippines. He is backed by the leftist Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan), which has accepted posts in the government.

Duterte presided over hundreds of “anti-crime” killings during his years as mayor of Davao.

He has said that if the Supreme Court or anyone else seeks to curtail his murderous war against drug-induced crime, he will impose martial law. But he intends no inroads against capitalist rule.

Business friendly

By “assuring there is peace and order,” Carlos Dominguez, Duterte’s governmental finance officer, told Bloomberg News, “he has been business friendly.”

Dominguez, who owns the Marco Polo Hotel in Davao, said the government will work to assure “business regulations are not restrictive.”

The Philippines, a colony of Spain, was seized by emerging U.S. imperialism in 1898. Hundreds of thousands of Filipinos were killed over the next few years resisting U.S. military occupation. Following independence in 1946, Washington maintained its military presence and backed a succession of semicolonial regimes, including the

brutal Ferdinand Marcos dictatorship that ruled for over two decades, most under martial law.

The U.S. rulers viewed supremacy in Asia and the Pacific as the spoils of its bloody victory over Japan in the second worldwide imperialist war. It established military bases throughout the area, patrolled by the U.S. Pacific Fleet. Next to Hawaii, home of the Pacific Command, the Philippines played a pivotal role. The Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Air Base there were the largest U.S. bases outside its borders. Both were logistical hubs for Washington’s wars in Korea, Vietnam and the first Iraq War.

Under the impact of its defeat in Vietnam, Washington’s ability to control the region against anti-colonial revolts weakened. In the Philippines a mass rebellion toppled Marcos in 1986. Sustained popular protests continued against the U.S. military bases, and in 1991 the Philippine Senate refused to ratify a new treaty for their lease. Washington was ordered to leave the next year. As China’s economy and reach has grown, Beijing began building military bases on reefs throughout the South China Sea, including off the Philippine coast.

In response, Washington has sought to shift the weight of its armed forces to the Pacific, opening new bases, increasing military exercises in the region and positioning 60 percent of its naval warships there by 2020. Countering Beijing in the South China Sea has been a centerpiece of Washington’s course.

Since 2002, some 500 U.S. troops have been stationed in the southern Philippines, conducting operations



Reuters/Romeo Ranoco

Since his June 30 inauguration, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has overseen mass killings of suspected drug users and toured army camps and police barracks building support among officers, soldiers and cops. Above, Duterte, center, at army headquarters in Taguig City Oct. 4.

against Abu Sayyaf, an Islamist terrorist group. Another 6,000 U.S. military personnel have been engaged in ongoing training exercises. U.S. naval visits have increased.

In January, the Philippines began implementing a military pact that would allow thousands of U.S. troops and military equipment to be stationed at Philippine bases, opening the way for Washington to re-establish a large-scale military presence. In March the two countries began joint naval patrols in the South China Sea.

But Duterte says that he intends to pursue “an independent foreign policy.” While abiding by Manila’s treaties with Washington, he wants to “open alliances” with Beijing and Moscow as well. “The Philippines is not a vassal state. We have long ceased to be a colony of the United States,” he said Sept. 5.

Duterte announced Sept. 12 that he wants U.S. forces to withdraw from the southern Philippines. And as joint military exercises were preparing to get underway in early October, he said that they would be the last, because “China does not want” them.

War on drugs targets workers

A hallmark of Duterte’s election campaign was the pledge to wage a war on drug sellers and users. “Do your

duty, and if in the process you kill,” he told police officers July 1, the day after his inauguration, “I will protect you.”

Since then, over 3,500 people have been murdered by police or police-organized vigilantes in this “war on drugs.” Some 20,000 have been arrested, cramming the country’s already grossly overcrowded jails. Those targeted in this campaign are overwhelmingly working people.

In this atmosphere, seven union leaders and activists were killed in vigilante murders in September.

Following his inauguration, Duterte’s government declared a cease-fire and opened negotiations with the Communist Party of the Philippines and the two main armed organizations fighting for the rights of Filipino Muslims, known as Moros, in the south. The armed wing of the Maoist CP, the New People’s Army, is reported to have dwindled to less than 4,000 from 26,000 in the 1980s. Its activity today centers on assassination, extortion and kidnapping in parts of the countryside.

Duterte has included figures associated with the CP in his cabinet, saying he wants an “inclusive government.” The CP has praised him for “standing up” to Washington. It has also backed his “anti-crime” campaign.

THE MILITANT

Support Kurdish independence struggle!

The Kurds, an oppressed people living in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, have long been denied a homeland. The ‘Militant’ reports on Kurdish struggles throughout the region and the Socialist Workers Party’s support for Kurdish independence.



Reuters/Sertac Kayar

Kurds in Diyarbakir, Turkey, protest suspension of teachers by Turkish government.

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant*’s views. These are expressed in editorials.

NJ train crash shows need for bigger crews, workers control

BY SETH GALINSKY

The New Jersey Transit train crash in its Hoboken station Sept. 29 that killed one person and injured more than 100 was not the first sign of serious problems at the railroad. There have been 160 NJ Transit “accidents” since 2011.

The capitalist news media has printed reams of speculation to direct blame toward train engineer Thomas Gallagher. Was the train going faster than the 10 mph speed limit in the terminal? Did the engineer have a health problem? A blood test rapidly confirmed that Gallagher was not under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Some papers publicized unsubstantiated claims that the passenger train was traveling at 30 mph. But the train was equipped with a cab signal that automatically applies the emergency brakes if it exceeds 19 mph in the terminal. Gallagher has told investigators that the last thing he remembers before the crash is entering the terminal at 10 mph.

“New Jersey Transit bosses’ disregard of elementary safety — from running trains with only the engineer in the locomotive cab to refusal to carry out essential maintenance — is responsible for a disaster that was waiting to happen,” Jacob Perasso, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate in New York, wrote in an Oct. 4 letter of solidarity to Gallagher’s union, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen. Perasso is a freight rail conductor and member of the Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers union. While there have been reports of the deteriorating condition of New Jersey Transit trains and rail infrastructure — even one of the “black box” event recorders recovered was broken — there has been almost no discussion on crew size or union control of safety. The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating the crash.

Decades ago, it was standard to have a helper in the locomotive or control cab alongside the engineer on both passenger and freight trains. But in the drive for profits at private railroads and to “cut costs” at government-owned ones, bosses have pushed back the unions and slashed crew sizes.

“The facts show disasters like the one in Hoboken are preventable, along with thousands of other on-the-job deaths that take place in industries across the country,” Perasso wrote. “Increasing the crew size and having an assistant engineer or conductor ride at the controls

with the engineer would add greatly to the safety of train crews and passengers.”

All the main public transport systems in the New York area have deteriorating infrastructure. Bloomberg News reported Jan. 6 that New Jersey Transit trains are breaking down more frequently due to lack of maintenance. According to the New Jersey *Star Ledger*, Gov. Chris Christie has put 222 transit projects on hold — including track rehabilitation, bridge and tunnel repair, improved signals and rail car overhaul — to narrow the state’s budget deficit.

The Federal Railroad Administration conducted a safety audit of NJ Transit earlier this year after an “uptick” in incidents, finding dozens of violations, reported the *Wall Street Journal*. NJ Transit — the third busiest commuter line in the country — paid \$70,000 in fines for safety violations in 2015.

Instead of a larger crew, which would cut into the profits, the bosses’ Association of American Railroads says installing a system known as positive train control, which would automatically slow



Chris O’Neil/NTSB

Wreckage after New Jersey Transit train crashed in Hoboken, N.J., Sept. 29. “Bosses’ disregard for safety is responsible,” said Jacob Perasso, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate from New York.

down trains that go over speed restrictions, is safety enough.

However, they delay putting the government-mandated PTC on their tracks, saying it’s too expensive. The government has granted an extension on installing PTC, now requiring completion by the end of 2018.

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen are backing a proposed minimum crew law. In the July

issue of their newspaper, the union explains that while PTC provides an “additional level of safety,” the new technology makes safety worse if it is used to cut crew sizes.

“We must fight for workers control over conditions on the jobs,” Perasso wrote. “We are the ones who can enforce safety for ourselves, our passengers and those who live along the tracks we run on.”

Workers say, ‘What can I do to help the party?’

BY MAGGIE TROWE

As Socialist Workers Party members engage in workers’ struggles whenever they arise and in day-in day-out discussions on their doorsteps across the country, we find workers who agree with what we say and want to join party members in activity. And they want to read and study the party’s literature and the *Militant*, and to contribute financially to sustain the SWP’s work.

“I consider myself a socialist,” said Nelson Daggett, a member of the Machinists union and ferry worker, after talking with SWP members John Naubert and Clay Dennison at his home in Mount Lake Terrace, Washington, Oct. 1. “I can’t stand big government and corruption.”

After deciding to subscribe to the *Militant* and buy two new books published by Pathfinder Press — *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?* and *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart?* — Daggett asked, “What else can I do to help the party?” Dennison told him about the Socialist Workers



Militant/Clay Dennison

Socialist Workers Party-Building Fund is one way workers can help advance party’s work. Edwin Fruit, left, talks about SWP with restaurant worker Xander Hatton in Olympia, Washington, Sept. 18.

Party-Building Fund and he kicked in \$10.

The 10-week appeal for contributions, which runs through Dec. 7, aims to raise \$100,000 to sustain the work of the party. Every branch of the party is reaching out broadly to workers in their region for contributions.

The working class is living through a crisis unlike anything any of us have experienced in our lifetimes. Feeling the impact of decades of grinding depression conditions, disturbed by the devastation wrought by 25 years of imperialist war in the Mideast and elsewhere, and unconfident the rulers have any solution to the crisis, millions of workers are open to discussing the need for the working-class to find the road to organizing the exploited and oppressed to take political power.

Reinaldo, a welder and unionist born in Puerto Rico, was pleased when SWP member Tamar Rosenfeld knocked on his door in New Haven, Connecticut, and introduced herself and her party. She invited him to attend the Oct. 9 rally across from the White House to

demand Puerto Rican independence fighter Oscar López be freed. He said he was familiar with López and how the U.S. government framed him up.

“I don’t know if we can win independence, after all these years of being a colony and being ‘Americanized,’” he said, but he agreed with the need to fight against the colonial exploitation of the island’s population.

“I think it’s possible both for the Puerto Rican people to win their independence and for us to make a revolution here in the U.S.,” Rosenfeld said. “Things — and we — change qualitatively as our struggles deepen.”

Reinaldo decided to make a donation to the fund on top of picking up a *Militant* subscription and the Spanish-language editions of *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart?* and

Puerto Rico: Independence is a Necessity by Puerto Rican independentista Rafael Cancel Miranda. “Good luck with your work,” he said.

To join the effort or make a contribution, contact the SWP branch in your area listed on page 8.

Socialist Workers Party-Building Fund	
Area	Quota
Atlanta	\$11,000
Chicago	\$11,500
Lincoln	\$300
Los Angeles	\$9,000
Miami	\$3,500
New York	\$22,500
Oakland	\$15,000
Philadelphia	\$4,500
Seattle	\$8,000
Twin Cities	\$4,500
Wash., DC	\$8,500
Other	
Total	\$98,300
Should be	\$100,000

Join SWP campaigning, make a donation!

Campaigners for the Socialist Workers Party presidential ticket of Alyson Kennedy and Osborne Hart are getting a great response: discussing with workers door to door the world crisis of capitalist production and trade, joining protests against cop brutality and against boss attacks, and asking people to join the SWP. Kennedy just returned from a nine-day fact-finding visit to Puerto Rico in solidarity with fighters for independence from Washington’s colonial rule.

You can join in these efforts — just get in touch with the party in your area, listed on page 8.

You can also contribute to the \$40,000 Campaign Fund that makes this work possible. Contributions can be made out to Socialist Workers National Campaign Committee and sent to 227 W. 29th St., 6th Floor, New York, NY 10001.

\$40,000 needed

\$28,725 raised to date

United Russia party victory masks workers’ discontent

BY NAOMI CRAINE

President Vladimir Putin hailed the results of the Sept. 18 elections in Russia as a big victory, saying voters chose “stability and trust the leading political force.” His United Russia party expanded its parliamentary majority to more than three-quarters of the 450 seats in the Duma.

A closer look reveals a different picture. Workers and farmers in Russia are being battered by the effects of the worldwide capitalist economic crisis there and are increasingly discontented. Labor protests are becoming more common and turnout in the elections hit a record low.

The Russian economy has been in a recession for more than a year and a half. The effects of the world slowdown in trade and production, and the plunge in the price of oil, a major Russian export, are exacerbated by sanctions imposed by Washington and other imperialist powers following Moscow’s annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Manufacturing production has shrunk, and construction contracted by 10 percent in the first half of 2016 to a lower level than during the 2009 recession. Russian workers’ real wages fell roughly 10 percent last year. Sixty-three percent of families now spend more than half their income just on rent and utilities, up from 55 percent in 2009.

Seventeen percent of workers report problems getting paid on time, the Russian paper *Kommersant* said Sept. 26. This has been a major cause of an uptick in labor actions.

Miners from Gukovo, in southwestern Russia, have been demonstrating since May under the slogan, “We are not slaves.” They’re demanding a year’s worth of back wages owed by King Coal, their now-bankrupt employer. After a hunger strike in August drew national media atten-

tion, they finally received part of what they’re owed. But “now they’re saying there’s no more money,” Dmitry Kovalenko, one of the miners, told the press.

Farmers from the southern region of Krasnodar Krai set out in a tractor convoy Aug. 22, planning to bring to Moscow their complaint that local officials were illegally redistributing land to big companies. Some of the organizers were arrested and charged with staging an “unsanctioned protest.”

Nationwide turnout for the Sept. 18 election was less than 48 percent, down from 60 percent five years ago. In Moscow, St. Petersburg and other major cities less than 30 percent of those eligible voted. In Irkutsk in southern Siberia, a region where work stoppages are on the rise, just 28 percent voted.

Officials in Chechnya, where the brutal regime of Ramzan Kadyrov was installed by Putin as part of crushing the second war for independence, claimed much higher participation. They said 95 percent came to the polls, and 96 percent voted for Putin’s United Russia party.

Putin, the former head of Moscow’s FSB secret police agency, has run the government since being appointed prime minister in 1999. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, former Soviet bureaucrats used their privileged positions to assemble fortunes as chunks of the Russian economy were privatized. A layer of U.S. “advisers” from Harvard, along with associated bankers and hedge fund managers, got in on the plunder in the name of helping to implement “mar-

Poland: 100,000 protest attack on abortion rights



Sipa USA via AP/Krystian Dobuszynski

Demonstrators on “Black Monday” in Warsaw, Poland, Oct. 3 protest a proposed law that would effectively ban abortion. Almost 100,000 people in 60 cities across the country boycotted jobs and classes in a nationwide strike and joined protests, shutting down businesses and government offices. The largest actions — each 20,000 strong — occurred in Warsaw and Wrocław.

Poland already has one of the most restrictive laws in Europe, allowing abortion only in cases of rape or incest, irreparable fetal damage or if the woman’s life is at risk. The Catholic Church pushes for a complete ban and the Catholic *Ordo Iuris* group has gathered the required number of signatures to put a “Stop Abortion” bill up for parliament’s consideration.

Legal abortions are estimated to number between 1,000 and 1,800 a year. But some 100,000 women either have abortions in private clinics or travel to other countries in the European Union annually. The new law imposes up to five years in prison for women who have abortions and for doctors who perform them.

— EMMA JOHNSON

ket reform.”

Representing the Russian capitalists who emerged from this orgy of pillage, Putin has sought to use strictly managed news to boost patriotism and identification with his regime, downplaying depression conditions there. He highlights Moscow’s foreign interventions and military actions abroad, from Ukraine to Syria.

Putin relies on a strategy that dates

back to czardom, seeking to maintain a defensive buffer zone in Moscow’s “near abroad” to make interference from European imperialist powers and Washington more difficult. The U.S. government and its NATO allies have been pressing Moscow, stationing troops and weaponry in some of the eastern European countries that became independent after the fall of

Continued on page 5

Rulers scapegoating provokes attacks on Muslims

BY EMMA JOHNSON

On the heels of a string of recent terror attacks by the anti-working-class Islamic State and their supporters — in Paris and Nice, France; Brussels, Belgium; Orlando, Florida; San Bernardino, California; and most recently in New York — capitalist governments and bourgeois politicians in Washington and Europe have called for increased spying on Muslims and mosques and restrictions on immigration from the Middle East.

This campaign has spurred an increase in harassment and assaults on Muslims and those who oppose anti-Muslim attacks and bigotry.

In the late evening of Sept. 26 two explosive devices detonated in Dresden, Germany, outside a mosque and a congress center. No one was hurt, but the imam, his wife and their two children were inside the building. Six bottles filled with explosive gas were found.

This came on the heels of an arson attempt on a Turkish-run mosque in Hessen. The head of the Turkish parliament’s human rights committee called on Berlin to provide security for Muslims in Germany after an investigation recorded some 300 attacks against mosques, most of them Turkish-run, between 2001 and 2014.

On Sept. 10, the Finnish Resistance Movement, a small rightist thug outfit that calls itself national socialist, organized an anti-immigrant action in Finland’s capital Helsinki. When 28-year-

old Jimi Karttunen walked by, he turned and spit in the direction of the demonstration. A well-known leader for the group kicked him in the chest and Karttunen fell to the ground, hitting his head. A week later he died from the injuries.

In response 15,000 people rallied in the streets of Helsinki Sept. 24 under the slogan “Peli Poikki!” (Enough is enough!). Thousands more protested in four other Finnish cities.

The fatal assault on Karttunen followed violence at similar actions by the Finnish Resistance Movement in other cities over the past year. Another group, the Soldiers of Odin, patrols the streets in some Finnish cities, saying they are looking for suspicious people from the Middle East.

In 2015, some 33,000 people — a tenfold average increase from previous years — applied for asylum in Finland, a country with a population of 5.5 million. More than three-quarters came from Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia.

Attacks on mosques in the U.S. increased sharply in 2015 over the previous four years and are on track to be at least as high this year, according to a 2016 report “Confronting Fear” distributed by the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

The attacks include assassinations, arson and physical assaults, as well as threats and harassment. A number involve local authorities across the country blocking Muslims from building

mosques and community centers.

The report details 55 attacks between this January and mid-September. In Houston in July, three masked attackers ambushed, stabbed and shot Dr. Arslan Tajammul as he was about to enter a mosque. In August Imam Maulama Akonjee and his associate Thara Uddin were killed near a mosque in Queens, New York.

In Titusville, Florida, a man wielding a machete broke cameras, lights and windows in a mosque and left three pounds of bacon at the front door. The Islamic Center in Omaha, Nebraska, received an email after the March terrorist attacks in Brussels, saying that “we think it’s now time to fight back starting with you. believe it. see you in hell.”

The report also documents self-declared “Muslim-free” business establishments that have cropped up in several states, bringing to mind similar signs from past U.S. history, like “Whites Only,” “No Dogs, No Jews” and “Irish Need Not Apply.”

The Socialist Workers Party has joined the Council on American-Islamic Relations and other opponents of discrimination and thuggery to protest such attacks. When town officials moved to bar the congregation of Atlanta-area Masjid Attaqwa from building a mosque and cemetery in Newton County, Georgia, SWP senatorial candidate Sam Manuel condemned the attack at an August town meeting of 300.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

AUSTRALIA

Sydney
South Australia Storm Sparks Statewide Blackout: A Disaster Prepared by Capitalism. Speaker: Joanne Kuniansky, Communist League. Fri., Oct. 14, 7 p.m. Donation: \$4/\$2(unwaged). *Upstairs, 281-7 Beamish St., Campsie. Tel.: (02) 9718-9698*

CANADA

Calgary
Solidarity With Working People of Syria. Canadian Troops Out of the Middle East. Speaker: Joe Young, Communist League. Fri., Oct. 14, 7:30 p.m. *Dragon City Mall, 328 Centre St. SE, Unit 246. Tel.: (403) 457-9044.*
Montreal:
Aleppo, Syria: Moscow, Assad Bomb Civilians. Withdraw Canada, U.S. Military From Middle East Now! Speaker: Beverly Bernardo, Communist League. Fri., Oct. 14, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. *7107 St. Denis, Room 204. Tel.: (514) 272-5840.*

UNITED KINGDOM

Manchester
Free Oscar López Now! Independence for Puerto Rico! Speaker: Dag Tirsén, Communist League. Donation: Fri., Oct. 14, 7 p.m. *£2.50. Room 301, Hilton House, 26-28 Hilton St., M1 2EH. Tel.: (016) 1478-2496.*

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

MAGGIE TROWE, EDITOR

Help the *Militant* cover labor struggles around the world!

This column gives a voice to those engaged in battle and building solidarity today — including workers locked out by Honeywell, United Gas Workers Union members fighting concession demands by Dominion Gas and construction workers demanding safe conditions. I invite those involved in workers' battles to contact me at 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018; or (212) 244-4899; or themilitant@mac.com. We'll work together to ensure your story is told.

— Maggie Trowe

Candy workers strike Just Born 'Peeps' plant in Pennsylvania

BETHLEHEM, Pa. — Workers here who produce the marshmallow chicks known as "Peeps" went on strike against the Just Born candy company Sept. 7. The 400 members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 6, whose contract expired in June, rejected what a union statement called a "substandard" wage increase and the bosses' proposal to eliminate the pension plan for new hires and increase health insurance costs.

A week after the walkout, applicants at a company-organized "job fair" at the plant were met by striking workers. One of them, Debbie Harden, who has worked as a machine operator and package handler for 16 years, told the *Militant* that the company wants to hire temporary and part-time workers at lower pay and with no benefits for "special projects."

"But who knows which job the company could say is a special project? It could be mine," she said.

Union steward Alex Fattore said that while some 65 union members have crossed the picket lines, contingents of former Verizon strikers who are members of the Communications Workers of America, workers from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, as well as Teamsters, have made solidarity visits.

Union officials, citing progress in negotiations, announced Sept. 30 that strikers would return to work that day.

— George Chalmers and Janet Post

California farmworkers discuss fight for overtime pay

FRESNO, Calif. — For years, farmworkers from up and down the Central Valley have fought to extend overtime pay for over eight hours a day and 40 hours a week. In August hundreds of United Farm Workers union members rallied at the state Capitol in Sacramento demanding legislators pass a bill to guarantee time-and-a-half overtime pay.

A new law signed by liberal Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown Sept. 12 sets a slow-motion course toward meeting the workers' demands. And it lets him suspend the progression by a year if he says it's necessary.

Starting in January 2019, the number of hours farmworkers must work before receiving overtime pay will drop by 30 minutes per year, reaching eight hours in 2022. For workers on farms with 25 or fewer employees, it will take another three years.

"We've been fighting for this for 78 years," Augustín García, a fruit-tree worker and UFW member, told the *Militant* in his home Sept. 18. He is a veteran of the fight for a union contract at Gerawan Farms.

In 1938, under the pressure of big labor battles that built the CIO industrial unions, Congress was forced to pass the Fair Labor Standards Act, which set a minimum wage and overtime pay. But agricultural workers were exempted.

In California, UFW-led farmworkers' mobilizations won overtime pay in the 1970s. But it didn't start until after a 10-hour day or 60-hour week.



Militant/Janet Post

Confectionery workers picket Just Born candy company in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Sept. 23 during three-week strike. Strike was suspended after company resumed negotiations.

"Being treated like other workers, it means respect for us and respect for what we do," said García.

But agricultural bosses in California claim they can't pay the overtime rates under the new law. They argue increased competition from imports and a yearslong drought mean they'll go out of business or cut overtime to save money, and the workers will suffer.

García had just returned from working the last day of a seven-day workweek. Many farmworkers work 10-hour

days, six or seven days a week.

"I'm hoping the overtime pay will mean that many of us won't be working Sundays and get to come home earlier on Saturday," he said.

Rafael Marquez, another union farmworker, said many of his co-workers were upset at the number of years it will take to get overtime after eight hours.

"The growers have been getting rich off our work, robbing us all these years," he said. "They owe us!"

— Betsey Stone

Russian election masks discontent

Continued from page 4
the Soviet Union.

This is behind Moscow's seizure of Crimea and ongoing intervention in eastern Ukraine since workers in that country mobilized in what became known as the Maidan there in 2014, overthrowing the vassal regime of Viktor Yanukovich.

Putin's approval rating soared at home after Moscow's occupation and annexation of Crimea, which he presented as a historic restoration of Russian territory.

The Crimean Tatars, who were the peninsula's primary inhabitants for centuries, don't see it that way. The Tatars faced discrimination and oppression under both the Russian czars and then

under Stalinism. The brief exception was during the revolutionary leadership of V.I. Lenin following the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

Today the Crimean Tatars, who overwhelmingly opposed Moscow's annexation and make up about 12 percent of the population, face growing repression. On Sept. 29 the Russian Supreme Court upheld a ban on the Mejlis, the Tatars' elected self-governing body.

The Russian government had already banned historic Tatar leaders from entering Crimea, including Mustafa Dzhemilev. It is stepping up arrests, disappearances and frame-up trials against members of the Mejlis and other Tatars for expressing opposition to Moscow's rule.

TRADE UNIONS in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay

by Leon Trotsky

"More food for thought (and action) than will be found in any book on the union question."

—FARRELL DOBBS

TRADE UNIONS
In the epoch of imperialist decay
by Leon Trotsky

FOREWORD BY FARRELL DOBBS
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25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

THE MILITANT
A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

October 18, 1991

LIBERAL, Kansas — Workers at National Beef Packing Co. won a union representation election here September 13. The night of the victory, hundreds celebrated in the streets until dawn.

National Beef is one of the largest beef packinghouses in the United States, employing 1,900 workers, of whom 85 percent are Latinos mainly from Mexico and 10 percent are Asians from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

United Food and Commercial Workers organizer Terry Gash characterized the victory as a "major" one, not only for the UFCW, but for all workers.

The workers began organizing a union in the plant in order to improve intolerable work and safety conditions and secure better wages and health benefits. The organizing drive grew more urgent when three workers were killed in June on top of a blood tank.

THE MILITANT
PUBLISHED WEEKLY IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE
NEW YORK, N.Y. WEEKLY PUBLISHED IN 1916

October 17, 1966

Undoubtedly encouraged by the New York City administration silence over the fire-bombing of the Socialist Workers Party headquarters Sept. 29 and the Sept. 4 bombing of the Communist Party headquarters, right-wing hoodlums struck again in the city Oct. 8. This time the target was the new Harlem bookstore "Communist Party USA — Marxist-Leninist" which was burned by arsonists.

The failure of the police and city administration to "link" the wave of rightist bombings or do anything effective to halt them must be denounced. All who believe in civil liberties must express their solidarity with the victims of this latest attack, and the antiwar movement, which these bombings aim to intimidate, must redouble its efforts to end the war in Vietnam.

THE MILITANT
Official Weekly Organ of the Socialist Workers Party

October 18, 1941

Roosevelt has taken another major step to drag this country into the imperialist war, by demanding the repeal of that section of the Neutrality Act which bars the arming of American merchant ships.

As in almost every other instance when Roosevelt has sought Congressional action, this latest step is intended merely to give legal sanction to measures he has already taken.

American merchant ships — under cover of Panama registry — are already travelling armed on the high seas. The arming was done secretly on orders of the Navy Department.

The fiction of "neutrality" was useful in concealing his war designs behind a screen of "peaceful intent." But the Neutrality Act no longer serves this purpose for Roosevelt. He is preparing for all-out war, and soon.

Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?



Militant/Michael Baumann

Mary-Alice Waters speaks at November 2008 Caracas launching of Venezuelan edition of *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?* Right, Carolina Álvarez from Monte Ávila publishing house.

Continued from front page to the *Militant*.

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BY NORTON SANDLER

Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible? The answer given here by Mary-Alice Waters is an unequivocal, “Yes!”

That is, however, only the first of the important questions addressed during what became the deepgoing international debate recorded in these pages. Even if a socialist revolution is possible, is it “*necessary*”? Why can’t capitalism be “regulated” and made to serve the interests of the overwhelming majority of humanity? What does the oft-abused term “revolution” mean? And are there any living examples we can learn from?

This 2016 edition of *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?* appears some eight years after the near meltdown of the world capitalist banking system in the closing months of 2008. That financial and stock market panic soon exposed a far deeper underlying crisis: the long downward trend of capitalist profit rates in the United States and internationally, and the resulting contraction of investment in production, trade, and hiring. A slow-burning worldwide depression had begun.

Despite assurances by high-ranking public officials, including President Barack Obama, that the US economy has now “recovered” from the worst financial crisis since the 1930s and is doing “pretty darn well,” working people know in our bones that for us it’s a lie.

A lie borne out by the facts we live with.

Median household income is today more than \$4,000 lower than it was in 1999, seventeen years ago, and that is often the cumulative income from multiple jobs worked by everyone in the family who can become a wage earner. The labor force participation rate (the size of the “working class” as measured by the capitalist government) is lower than any time since 1978, largely because more and more workers haven’t been able to find a job and aren’t currently looking.

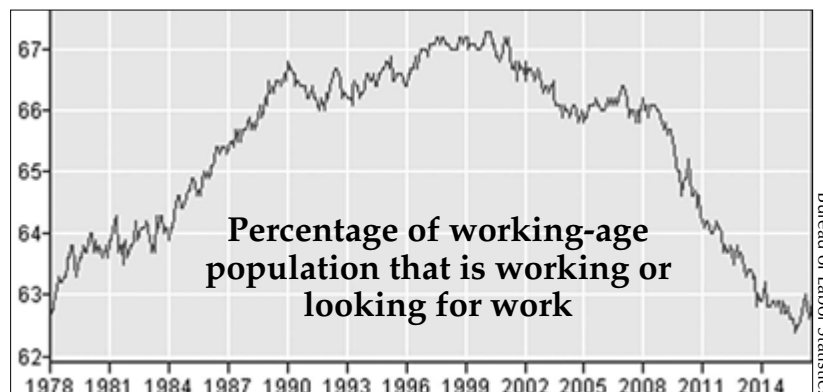
Inflation, they tell us, is basically flat, but just since the turn of the century rents have more than doubled on average, as have school fees and childcare, while medical costs and the hit at the grocery store have gone up nearly 100 percent. In the last year alone, health insurance jumped on average by 7 percent, school lunches by nearly 6 percent, and transit fares by more than 5 percent.

Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya — Washington’s wars and their grisly consequences at home and around the world keep metastasizing. Tens of millions are homeless and displaced.

The presumption of stability and a new era of peace and prosperity born of an “ever closer” European Union has shattered. The economic social and political crises in Latin America, Africa, and Asia are deepening.

Told they have to choose between two of the most broadly distrusted presidential candidates in US history, is it any surprise so many answer, “I won’t happily vote for either one!”

This 2016 edition of *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?* is addressed to working people — in city, town,



Reuters/Muhammad Hamed

Government officials claim U.S. economy has “recovered,” but workers know that’s a lie. Chart shows labor participation rate is lowest since 1978. Meanwhile, deadly consequences of U.S. wars “keep metastasizing,” new book’s preface says. Millions have been forced to flee fighting in Syria alone. Above, Syrians at Al Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan, Jan. 20.

and countryside — across the US and around the world, who are searching for proletarian solidarity and a way forward in this world of deepening capitalist conflict. It is addressed to the women and men of every skin color, religion, national origin, and age who are every day more determined to understand the roots of what is happening to their families and themselves, more open to joining together with others to fight for a future only we can create.



The five-day rolling political debate on which this book is based took place in November 2007 at the Venezuela International Book Fair, a popular cultural festival held yearly in Caracas. The book centers around the talk given by Mary-Alice Waters, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party in the US and president of Pathfinder Press, who opened the panel discussion on “The United States: A Possible Revolution,” the book fair’s theme. The narrative is driven forward by the responses and reactions to the issues posed by Waters, as well as her answers.

The wide-ranging debate that unfolded was unique in its depth and clarity. Although virtually all twenty-two panelists were from the US, certainly no similar exchange among the different political currents they represented has taken place in living memory.

Is the integration of millions of toilers from Latin America and around the world into the US working class a potential strength or fatal source of weakness and division? Are US workers so corrupted by the wealth of US capitalist society that they are incapable of revolutionary struggle? Were the American War of Independence from the British crown and the US Civil War the First and Second American Revolutions, or has there never been a revolutionary struggle of any kind in US history? Has “white skin privilege” destroyed every progressive social struggle in US history? Do Jews control the banks and capitalist media conglomerates of the world? Was 9/11 an Israeli conspiracy?

Does Cuba remain the only “free territory of the Americas,” or is Venezuela showing the toilers of the world a new road to socialism?

These were among the sharply counterposed perspectives on fundamental questions of revolutionary strategy and perspectives presented and debated with only a few breaches of civility.

Waters’s presentation appears here along with an introduction summarizing the issues that were joined. An article by staff writer Olympia Newton from the pages of the *Militant* newspaper reports on the political exchange, which involved several hundred audience participants in addition to the panelists.

When the November 2007 debate took place, only the first tremors of the coming housing-fueled “debt crisis” and subsequent near-collapse of the credit and banking system had been felt.

One year later, the dam had burst, and the consequences were beginning to be felt by working people the world over. At the November 2008 Caracas book fair — on the first anniversary of the exchange — Monte Ávila, one of Venezuela’s leading publishers, presented an edition of *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?* for sale in bookstores throughout that country. They also distributed a thousand copies of a special printing without charge to young readers at the fair.

Speaking at the Caracas launching of the Monte Ávila edition, Waters described what had transpired the previous twelve months. She looked back at the debate that had taken place a year earlier in light of the economic and social crisis, which was rapidly escalating and expanding geographically, including across Latin America.

This 2016 edition of *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?*, like the second edition published in 2009, includes both talks by Waters.

Readers will judge for themselves how well the perspectives laid out almost a decade ago have stood the test of time.

September 2016



Militant/Róger Calero

Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible? poses critical questions for working people, including if there are living examples we can learn from today. Above, May 1 mobilization of 1 million in Havana backing revolution. Cuba is “free territory of the Americas,” Mary-Alice Waters says.

Oscar López: Join fight for Puerto Rican independence!

A letter from Oscar López Rivera — jailed in the U.S. for more than 35 years for fighting for independence for Puerto Rico — was read by his daughter Clarisa at a Sept. 24 program at New York’s El Museo del Barrio, where longtime *independentista* Rafael Cancel Miranda was the featured speaker. The *Militant* prints the slightly abbreviated letter below. Subheadings are by the *Militant*. Cancel Miranda was one of five Puerto Rican Nationalists who were imprisoned in the 1950s for carrying out armed protests in Washington, D.C., to bring attention to U.S. colonial rule over the island.

Born in Puerto Rico, López moved to Chicago when he was 14 years old and was later drafted into the U.S. Army and sent to Vietnam. He grew to oppose the war and joined the fight to win freedom for the five Nationalists and independence for Puerto Rico. He was arrested in 1981 and railroaded to jail on frame-up charges of “seditious conspiracy.” Despite more than 12 years in solitary confinement and being required to report to prison authorities every two hours during the day, the U.S. government has been unable to break López’s spirit or opposition to U.S. colonial rule.



It is an honor and a privilege for me to share with you what Rafael Cancel Miranda means to me and how he has influenced my life. When I came home from Vietnam I felt the need to search for a transformative path in order to find new meaning and purpose in my life. It was a time when the Puerto Rican youth were talking about Puerto Rican independence and that we should get involved and do something about it.

I used to go every Saturday to get a haircut and I heard the barbers and another client talking about Puerto Rican independence and the five political prisoners who were in federal prisons. They caught my attention. Up to that moment I knew nothing about the Five — Lolita Lebrón, Irving Flores, Andrés Figueroa Cordero, Rafael Cancel Miranda and Oscar Collazo López. The gentleman who was explaining what was going on was a Nationalist who often made the rounds where young people were hanging out. He would talk to us about them and ask us to get involved in the struggle. And that was how I started to take interest in the campaign for the freedom of our Five National Heroes.

Unjust and criminal Vietnam War

Because those were times when the issue of the opposition to the U.S. war in Vietnam was very prevalent, one of the first things I discovered about Ra-

fael was that he had dared to refuse being drafted by the U.S. armed forces. He had done what I had refused to do. Because I didn’t want to go to prison I allowed myself to be drafted by the U.S. Army and ended up participating in an unjust and criminal war.

I became an opponent of the war once I had experienced it and knew how devastating and horrible it was. But Rafael at a very young age had had the courage to stand strong on his patriotism, on his profound love for Puerto Rico, for freedom and justice and had opted to go to prison rather than be used as cannon fodder in the wars the U.S. government was waging. He was about the same age I was in 1967 when on the first of March 1954 he had decided along with Lolita, Andrés and Irving to bring the issue of Puerto Rico’s colonial status to the U.S. Congress to let the world know what the U.S. government was doing to Puerto Rico. And what he and his compañeros did and the fact they were willing to sacrifice their lives to save our beloved homeland meant a great deal to me. They had set an example I chose to try to emulate.

Campaign for freedom

Soon the campaign for their freedom started to take shape in Chicago. The campaign was already gaining momentum in Puerto Rico and in New York City. When I started knocking on doors and talking with community residents I was surprised to find out that some of them remembered both cases — the 1950 attack on Blair House carried out by Griselio Torresola and Oscar Collazo López and the 1954 one carried out by Lolita, Irving, Andrés and Rafael — and that most of them thought they were no longer in prison. They showed interest and concern for their plight and responded positively to the campaign for their freedom. While working on their campaign one of the moments I

Picket hits Washington’s takeover of Puerto Rico’s budget



Mario Rubén Carrión

NEW YORK — Leaving no doubt whose interests it will defend, the fiscal control board for Puerto Rico held its first meeting Sept. 30 near Wall Street. The board was appointed by President Barack Obama to ensure payment of Puerto Rico’s \$70 billion debt to bondholders. It has the power to override all financial-related decisions of the Puerto Rican government, including jobs, wages, health care and retirement funds.

More than 50 people protested outside chanting, “Your economic policy proves that we’re a colony,” “Who voted for you?” and “It’s not our debt!” Protesters also demanded freedom for independence fighter Oscar López, jailed in the U.S. for more than 35 years. A simultaneous protest took place at the U.S. Courthouse in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The board’s first action was to give Puerto Rico Gov. Alejandro García two weeks to submit plans for budget cuts. He promised to collaborate.

— SETH GALINSKY

remember most was when Rev. José A. Torres suggested we name our escuelita puertorriqueña Rafael Cancel Miranda. And for a decade we were able to see the campaign gain more and more support until Sept. 10, 1979, when four of our Five National Heroes came home from prison.

During the 37 years that Rafael has been out of prison he has stood firm on his patriotism with his profound love for Puerto Rico, for freedom and justice, with his solidarity with the different factions of the independence movement and with Cuba, the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, with the FMLN in El Salvador, with the Palestinian struggle, with the Zapatistas in Mexico et al. He is not only

our national hero but also a real universal citizen.

Only 23 months after the release of our Five National Heroes I was sent to USP Leavenworth, the same prison where Oscar Collazo and Irving Flores had been released. But from the moment I walked into that gulag I knew I had the example of our Five National Heroes. And for over 35 years, especially Rafael has been my fountain of strength, hope and courage.

In 1986 I was sent to USP Marion, from where Rafael had been released. There were there several prisoners who knew him. They constantly asked me about him and how he was doing. The

Continued on page 9

Widespread support for López in Puerto Rico

Continued from front page
three years has held an action on the last Sunday of every month.

Gathered at the bridge that leads into Old San Juan, the demonstrators donned pink T-shirts and chanted as passing cars honked in support.

Alida Millán, a coordinator of the group, urged as many as possible to go to Washington, D.C., on Oct. 9 for a “Free Oscar López” demonstration. The turnout in San Juan was larger than usual because it was part of the effort to build a delegation to join that action.

Demonstrators filled a clear “ballot box” with dozens of bright pink pens that will be taken to the White House — along with a draft executive clemency order — so President Barack Obama “will have no excuse” not to sign a presidential decree releasing López, organizers said. The independence fighter, now 73, is serving a 70-year sentence at the federal prison in Terre Haute, Indiana.

Among the speakers were San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz, a representative of a delegation from the town of Caguas in the central region of the island, and Afro-Puerto Rican singer

Choco Orta, who sang a song she composed about López’s fight.

Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president, told the crowd that as she and her supporters campaign door to door throughout the United States, they have been building the Oct. 9 demonstration and urging everyone to join the fight to free the jailed independence fighter. “Because of their own experiences with the capitalist ‘justice’ system, many workers in the U.S. can identify with Oscar and his fight for freedom,” Kennedy said.

Kennedy, SWP senatorial candidates Jacob Perasso from New York and Cindy Jaquith from Miami, along with Martín Koppel, were on a nine-day solidarity and fact-finding tour in Puerto Rico.

The support for this fight has been fueled by the growing anger among working people in this U.S. colony at the consequences of the unprecedented capitalist economic crisis — increased joblessness, spiraling food prices and cuts in social programs and pensions in the name of repaying the island’s debt to the banks and bondholders. In contrast with the discredited colonial parties that

are administering these attacks, López is seen by many as an example of dignity and resistance.

The SWP delegation found there was widespread familiarity with Oscar López and support for his release. It was noticeable as they went door to door talking with workers in the San Juan neighborhoods of Villa Palmeras and Caño Martín Peña.

“Tell Obama to free Oscar López,” was one of the first things Pedro, a retired dockworker, said when Perasso met a group of three workers standing in the shade on Rexach Street. “Thirty-five years is way too long.”

In meetings with members of the electrical workers union UTIER and water workers union UIA, they learned of demonstrations they and other unionists have joined for López’s freedom.

When the visiting SWP members had a hard time finding a parking spot that was not prohibitively expensive, a young parking lot attendant asked where they were headed. They pointed to the Oscar López rally up the street. “Don’t worry,” she replied with a smile, handing them a free valet parking ticket.

Concert/rally to Free Oscar López!

Puerto Rican
independence
fighter
jailed in U.S.
for more than 35 years

Washington, D.C.
12 noon, Sun. Oct. 9
Lafayette Park in front of the
White House

For more info: freeoscarlopeznow.com or
boricuahumanrights.org

Free Oscar! Independence for Puerto Rico!

Continued from front page

stands shoulder to shoulder with you and extends our solidarity to all those fighting for an end to U.S. colonial domination and for the independence of Puerto Rico.

The economic crisis that is battering Puerto Rican working people today is not of your making. It is part of something much larger, a world economic situation unlike anything we have seen in our lifetimes. The disaster of unknown proportions that is looming over us all has come crashing down on you before many others, however, because of the colonial bondage in which you are held by the ruling families of U.S. capital.

Across the United States, as we go door to door talking with working people about this crisis, my party is urging everyone we talk with to join the campaign that is gaining strength every day to tell the US government: *Free Oscar López now!* Because of their own experiences with the capitalist “justice” system, many workers in the United States can identify with Oscar and his fight for freedom. And today we are working with others to organize as many people as possible to go to Washington, D.C., Oct. 9 to demand the release of our brother Oscar.

On our return from Puerto Rico, we will tell workers and farmers in the United States what we have learned from your experiences and struggles. The fight to end Washington’s colonial domination of Puerto Rico is also in the interests of working people in the United States because we face a common enemy — the imperialist ruling class and its government.

For example, two weeks ago I was part of a rally of 5,000 coal miners in Washington, D.C., demanding the U.S. government live up to its commitments to guarantee miners’ pensions and health care benefits.

As you here in Puerto Rico will understand well from your own experiences with similar multinational corporations, many coal companies in the U.S. have declared bankruptcy precisely to get rid of their health care and pension obligations to tens of thousands of retired miners, many of whom face serious illnesses like black lung because of their years of work in the mines.

We embrace the thousands of Puerto Ricans who have been forced to migrate to the United States because of the devastating crisis here. We will find ourselves fighting side by side, and they will help strengthen the solidarity between workers in both countries.

Unlike the Democratic and Republican candidates, the parties of the U.S. capitalist class, I am not here in Puerto Rico to seek votes in a U.S. election. We are here to offer solidarity. We are here to support your right to self-determination. We are here to join your protests against the U.S. fiscal control board and other struggles by workers and youth to defend jobs, wages, health care, education, and living standards.

We oppose efforts to make the Puerto Rican people pay the billions in debt to the wealthy bondholders. As the independence movement explains so well, the board shows the real face of colonial domination.

Revolutionary Cuba, which for more than half a century has defended its sovereignty and freedom in face of the mightiest empire in history, is a powerful example for us. It shows that when workers and farmers take political power out of the hands of the capitalist minority, we can use it to reorganize society in the interests of the vast majority, and against all odds, we can win.

We add our voices to yours in saying: Free Oscar López now! End U.S. colonial domination! Independence for Puerto Rico!

Hundreds protest cop killing of Alfred Olango

Continued from front page

the cops not to shoot him and a cop tells her to “Shut the f--- up.” Seconds later, Olango is dead.

“When the officer pulled the trigger on my son he declared war on humanity,” Richard Olango Abuka, Alfred’s father, told the Oct. 1 rally. “We are going to fight like one people, like brothers and sisters. The police officer who killed my son is a criminal.”

“I’m out here because of the need to stop the killing,” Jeremiah Patton, a 22-year-old retail worker who joined the march, told the *Militant*. “The cops have to stop trying to justify it.”

Several religious figures, Black and Caucasian alike, also spoke at the rally.

Spreading opposition to cop brutality

The killing was one of several recent police killings nationwide, including of Keith Scott in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Terence Crutcher in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Olango was one of three Black men killed by cops in southern California within the last week.

Reginald Thomas, a father of eight children, was killed in Pasadena Sept. 30 when police fired a Taser at him and he stopped breathing. Carnell Snell Jr. was shot and killed by cops the following day after he fled from a car they were attempting to pull over. The cops

chased him as he ran toward his home in South Los Angeles. These killings were also met by protests.

Protests by professional athletes started when Colin Kaepernick, a quarterback with the San Francisco 49ers, started kneeling during the playing of the Star-Spangled Banner before games. He has since been joined by other athletes, both Black and Caucasian.

This protest is spreading widely in high schools across the country. “You can’t continue to slap people in the face and not expect them to stand up,” Vicqari Horton, a junior tight end at Aurora Central High School in Aurora, Colorado, told the *New York Times*.

Over the past weekend three-quarters of the team’s players joined the protest. The Oct. 3 *Times* reported similar demonstrations at high schools in Camden, New Jersey; Omaha, Nebraska; Madison, Wisconsin; San Francisco and Oakland, California; and Seattle. Some included cheerleaders and band members.

“We know what we’re doing; we made a conscious decision,” Jalil Grimes, 17, the senior quarterback in Aurora, told the *Times*. “We see police do us wrong. We see our teachers give up on us and expect us to fail. We’ve always seen this. Once we saw somebody else stand up against it, we just fell in line.”

And in Beaumont, Texas, 11- and 12-year-olds from a youth team called the Beaumont Bulls took a knee.

Oscar López: Join fight for independence

Continued from page 7

love and respect they had for him was immense and to this day I still run into prisoners who ask about him. I share with them photos, books and articles I have of Rafael. And when I have had the opportunity to talk with Rafael I tell them how he is doing.

I have seen Rafael only twice, in courts while on trial. We have not had many conversations. But there have been moments when I have heard him being interviewed. There is one interview that stands strong in my mind, it was by Radio Havana Cuba and he was accompanied by his beloved Angie. And I could sense in the middle of the night how much love Rafael has for our beloved homeland, but also for the struggle for a better and more just world.

I also heard an interview made in Nicaragua and again his words were the ones of the patriot who stands on his commitment to fight for freedom and justice and of the universal citizen who will never stop struggling for the independence and sovereignty of our beloved homeland, and supporting every organization that needs his support.

He is my mentor, my brother and my compañero forever. Let’s keep his example alive and let’s honor him every day by making his example our legacy. Much love to all. Let’s dare to struggle and let’s dare to win.

En resistencia y lucha,

*Oscar López Rivera
Terre Haute, Indiana*

Imperialist quandary

Continued from front page

and civilian opponents of the Bashar al-Assad regime points to the contradictions facing Washington.

The *New York Times* released excerpts in which Kerry complains that he’s one of “three people, four people in the administration who have all argued for use of force” in Syria. “I lost the argument.”

Kerry points out the political limits to Washington using its massive military force in Syria. “We’ve been fighting in the region for 14 years,” he says. “A lot of Americans don’t believe that we should be fighting and sending young Americans over to die in another country. That’s the problem.”

The breakdown in talks “has revived an internal discussion over giving U.S.-vetted Syrian rebels new weapons systems,” the *Wall Street Journal* said Oct. 4. Or, “Washington could give a green light to partners in the region, including Turkey and Saudi Arabia, to provide the rebels with more weapons,” it added.

At the same time, Kerry said in Brussels Oct. 4 that the administration “held out the possibility of once again working with Moscow.” He said Washington was pursuing talks through the International Syria Support Group, which includes Moscow.

The Assad regime and allied forces — including Moscow’s warplanes, Iranian troops, Lebanese Hezbollah forces and Iraqi Shiite militias — have intensified their murderous offensive against government opponents in the eastern half of the city of Aleppo.

Targets of their bombing include hospitals, markets and residential areas. The M10 hospital in eastern Aleppo was completely destroyed Oct. 3 when it was bombed for the third time in six days.

The day before, another hospital that was built inside a cave was forced to close after being struck by “bunker-buster” bombs in an opposition-held part of the Hama region, south of Aleppo.

Part of the cease-fire deal that collapsed last month was that Washington and Moscow would coordinate attacks on Islamic State and Jabhat Fatah al-Sham, until recently known as the Nusra Front and affiliated with al-Qaeda. But many of the opposition groups that Washington backs in Syria fight alongside Fatah al-Sham, and are increasingly driven to do so as they face the government offensive in Aleppo.

Washington’s policy is built on its inability to use its imperialist army in Syria. They instead press Moscow for a deal. Their unending wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have rendered U.S. imperialism weaker.

Ankara seeks greater role in war

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is pushing ahead with plans to take control of a 1,930-square-mile “security zone” in northern Syria. Turkish troops and militias from the Free Syrian Army, backed by U.S. airstrikes, launched an offensive Oct. 2 on the town of Dabiq, held by Islamic State.

From the outset, the Turkish government has made clear its “Operation Euphrates” is aimed not only against Islamic State, but above all at preventing the Syrian Kurds from connecting the autonomous cantons that they’ve gained control of in northern Syria.

Erdogan has also sought to improve relations with Moscow, a move that would give Ankara more leverage with Washington. He is meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin Oct. 10 in Istanbul.

Washington has sought to balance its relations with Ankara, a NATO member, and with the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG), which it counts on in combating Islamic State in Syria.

The Turkish parliament approved a one-year renewal of the government’s mandate to deploy troops in Iraq and Syria Oct. 1. This comes as Washington, Baghdad and the autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq prepare to launch a long-discussed offensive to drive Islamic State out of Mosul.

The Iraqi parliament voted Oct. 4 to reject extending permission for Turkey’s 2,000 troops to remain in northern Iraq, some just nine miles northeast of Mosul. While Ankara’s main goal there is to target forces of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), Erdogan has also raised participating in the assault on Mosul alongside Sunni militias his troops have trained. “We will play a role in the Mosul liberation operation and no one can prevent us from participating,” he said Oct. 1.

“I fear the Turkish adventure could turn into a regional war,” Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi told Iraqi state TV Oct. 5.